The Evolution of Information Operations at Brigade and Below

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THE POST-COLD WAR paradigm for U.S. forces in combat and in military operations other than war (MOOTW) is increasingly a nonlinear battlespace where brigades and battalions conduct independent operations in assigned sectors. In postcombat and peace-support operations, nonkinetic/nonlethal means are often the main effort. The new paradigm is changing the way the Army plans, coordinates, executes, and conducts information-operations (IO) and IO-effects assessment at brigade and below. Responsibility for information operations is devolving to brigades and battalions, forcing them to create brigade and battalion IO cells and develop tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) in an ad hoc manner.

Brigades and below have created IO cells, often capitalizing on the organic fire support element (FSE). To create an IO cell out-of-hide, battalions have appointed fire support and information operations officers (FSIOs) or S39s, and brigades have employed S39s, S7s, or information operations coordinators (IOCOORDs).[1] In many instances, units expanded the FSE to incorporate information operations and capitalize on the field artillery community's expertise in nonlethal fires.

Published Army IO doctrine and training courses focused on operational and high-end tactical or division operations. Applying doctrine at the tactical level of brigades and battalions involves difficult work converting doctrine, tools, and TTPs. Observer-controllers at the National Training Center observed that rotating units often have difficulty employing unit information operations at brigade and below. At the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), where exercises include tactical information operations, rotating units are encountering similar challenges.

At the JRTC, brigades and below must apply tactical information operations to counter a fully integrated enemy IO campaign employing local print media and TV and radio. Units at the JRTC must employ tactical information operations against an enemy whose IO campaign is composed of a variety of threats, including terrorist and criminal organizations employing suicide bombings and the execution or murder of local officials.

The trends in tactical information operations for units rotating through JRTC include the following:

- Staffs are not building IO-shaping operations into courses of action for combat operations or for stability operations and support operations (SOSO).
- Units are uncomfortable with and untrained in information operations.
- Brigade leaders often neglect to assign an IO officer to integrate information operations into maneuver plans before or during combat operations.[2]

Tactical Information Operations

Efforts to form an IO staff at brigade and below began during the Balkans conflict, if only in an ad-hoc manner. During Operations Joint Endeavor, Joint Guard, and Joint Forge in Bosnia, brigades began to plan, coordinate, execute, and assess information operations within their sectors to leverage nonlethal effects in support of the commander's objectives. This trend continued during Operation Joint Guardian in Kosovo. Units developed organizational structures and standing operating procedures (SOPs) and subsequently refined and tested them in operations in sector. First Armor Division's Task Force (TF)

Falcon, a brigade-size element, commanded by a brigadier general, enabled and entrusted its battalions to plan, coordinate, execute, and assess information operations as part of the Multi-National Brigade (East).

During Operation Joint Guardian in 2000, TF Falcon's IO staff was essentially a division-level IO staff, whose first-level subordinate maneuver elements were battalions instead of brigades. The term "IO staff" refers to all staff officers who plan, coordinate, and execute information operations. "IO cell" refers to the permanent standing cell around which the IO staff is organized. Several IO staff members were full-time staff in other TF staff sections or were leaders of TF units. Task Force Falcon's IO staff nucleus was the IO cell's field support team (FST) from the 1st Information Operations Command (Land) (IOC [L]), led by a Functional Area (FA) 30 IO officer and staffed with a civilian target analyst (contractor), two company grade officers, and a noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC).[3] The IO cell replicated those employed in the American-led Multinational Division Headquarters in Bosnia.

The 1st IOC FST chief served as the IOCOORD, briefed information operations directly to the TF commander or the chief of staff, and coordinated staff interaction through the G3. The IOCOORD worked through IO and civil military operations (CMO) overlap problems with the deputy commander for CMO to ensure mutual support. The level of external augmentation in the TF Falcon IO cell was situation-specific and did not fit the model for future brigade-level IO cells, but it generated the requirement to form subordinate IO staffs in subordinate battalion task forces.

A TF Falcon IO working group (IOWG) made up of the IOCOORD, the 1st IOC FIST, the public affairs officer (PAO), the tactical action center, and the tactical psychological operations (PSYOP) company commander conducted daily IO planning, coordination, and battle tracking. The IOWG met once weekly, and included other TF staff members and subordinate battalion IO officers.

The TF Falcon IOWG agenda typically focused on cities or villages as general problem sets in the area of operations (AO). IOWG meetings usually began with the 1st IOC analyst's review of incidents over the preceding week in each of the areas. The PAO briefed an analysis of local, regional, and international media reporting and its effect on information operations. As maneuver battalion IO officers reported on the cities and villages in their assigned AOs, the IOCOORD incorporated the supporting unit and functional representatives into the discussion, assigned IO tasks, and established priorities of effort for each maneuver battalion, supporting unit, and function representative. The G2 assessed the outlook for each city and village for the next week. The IOCOORD then took recommendations for targeting for 2 weeks out.

Kosovo Information Operations

Information operations in Kosovo were characterized by two ongoing, synchronized IO operations: one to shape the operating environment for future operations; the other to provide direct support to battalion task forces.[4] Task Force Falcon battalions appointed IO officers to plan, coordinate, execute, and assess tactical information operations and employed the fire support officer (FSO) and his FSE as the core IO cell. One battalion task force, TF 1st Battalion, 35th Armored Regiment (TF 1-35 AR), modified the fire support architecture at task force and company levels to plan, coordinate, execute, and assess information operations. The TF 1-35 AR FSIO cell consisted of 39 personnel collecting intelligence and information to support operations planning and IO integration. The task force's S2, with a staff of four, focused on collecting tactical data and conducted a pattern analysis of quantifiable data such as violent attacks in sector. The FSIO collected perceptions data, focused on sociopolitical conditions that ignited violent acts, and developed a dialogue with the IO target audience to elicit accurate assessments of the situation in the task force's sector.

FSIO cells performed nonlethal targeting and fused intelligence from a variety of sources into useful information to drive operations. Human, signal, and open-source intelligence (HUMINT, SIGINT, and OSINT) collectors reported directly to the brigade. In a high-intensity conflict environment, HUMINT or PSYOP teams controlled by the division are usually sufficient to support rapid decisive operations. In MOOTW, however, brigade and battalion areas of operations have increased so much in size and complexity that many intelligence and IO tasks have devolved to the level of brigade and below. The TF 1-35 AR battalion commander, for example, was responsible for 400 square kilometers of battlespace that included many towns, major traffic routes, country borders, and an ethnically mixed population.

In peace operations, friend and foe alike compete for legitimacy in a race to identify leverage points

U.S. Army

U.S. and Serbian officers meet to discuss information operations, planning, and actions in preparation for full relaxation of the Ground Safety Zone in Kosovo, 11 March 2003.

within target audiences. Task Force 1-35 AR constantly sought to identify tangible and nontangible assets to enhance legitimacy. Leverage takes many forms, but it is often elusive to the warrior's eye, if he is unfamiliar with the levers of information operations and influence. As the task force became familiar with the battlespace, it began using the issue of economic prosperity as a lever to convince citizens to cooperate with it and to impose its will on those who did not. Truthful exchanges created public trust, which led to increased public support and, ultimately, legitimacy.

The TF 1-35 FSIO cell synthesized intelligence and civil affairs projects, PSYOP, and tactical data to keep the commander armed and ready to engage with the populace when needed. In complex MOOTW, IO targets include influential groups or politicians who can influence behavior in the commander's area of responsibility. Recurring events lead to battlefield knowledge through pattern analysis.

The detection phase of targeting underscores the importance of predictive analysis. Accurate prediction and foreknowledge of events are vital to assigning acquisition assets at the right time and place and to enable engagement with the right nonlethal method. Foreknowledge of such events as soccer games and church, youth group, political, and civil meetings is important because such events provide opportunities to engage the target audience and communicate IO messages. They are also venues through which to collect information and intelligence. The ability to deliver IO messages creatively depends on situational awareness. When the IO staff has armed the company or battalion commander with knowledge, he can effectively address the concerns of townspeople in his area of responsibility (AOR) and influence their behavior.

Preparations for face-to-face engagements are similar to those for echeloned combat operations. Just as fire support planners echelon the application of lethal indirect fire in support of maneuver, beginning with 155-millimeter (mm) and 105-mm mortars, and transitioning to 81-mm and 60-mm mortars while closing on the objective, IO planners analyze every IO target to determine the right caliber of weapon to employ. They combine the right issue and the right leader for the selected target. The TF 1-35 AR IO cell prepared a set of talking points for its company commanders and reinforced the message up to the level of command necessary to achieve the desired effect. Face-to-face meetings might call for the presence of the battalion or brigade commander, whose actions are often more effective than a company commander's because of the resources and AOR under his command.

Effective information operations require coordination with the international coalition supporting the peace operation. The TF 1-35 AR FSIO coordinated with nongovernmental organizations, the UN Mission in Kosovo police, and other coalition partners in the area (and even across boundaries when necessary) to ensure all were in harmony with tactical and operational objectives. The task force established a dialogue with youth groups, political organizations, and unemployed minorities. The task force focused on the disadvantaged elements of society because these elements often fell under the influence of extremists who might offer economic support. Disadvantaged citizens are vulnerable to persuasion by those who oppose peace support operations and will often accept money to attend demonstrations or perform criminal acts. Armed with an understanding of the local populace, the FSIO and the S3 can place patrols and PSYOP and civil affairs assets at precisely the right place and time, thereby economizing forces.

Information Operations in the IBCT

With the 2002 stand-up of interim brigade combat teams (IBCTs), the brigade IO section became a table of organization and equipment fixture instead of an ad hoc organization. The IBCT IO section

replicated those found at the division level. Employing effects-based operations (EBO) concepts, the IBCT IO section coordinates lethal and nonlethal effects as part of the fires and effects coordination cell.

The IBCT IO section of two IO officers, a civil affairs officer, an electronic warfare officer, and a PSYOP noncommissioned officer (NCO) synchronizes CMO with IO objectives, and image-projection and perception-management tasks.[5] The brigade PSYOP officer coordinates the operations of a supporting tactical PSYOP detachment equipped with loudspeakers and a product-dissemination capability. Because the IBCT does not have a PAO to provide media guidance, talking points, and interact with the media, these tasks fall to the IO section.

When augmented by a public affairs detachment and combat camera (COMCAM) team, the IBCT IO section can leverage the media to reinforce positive images and counter enemy propaganda and misinformation. At the battalion and company level, the FSOs and NCOs provide connectivity to the IBCT IO section.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 3d Brigade Combat Team (BCT) of the 82d Airborne Division built on the IBCT model and formed its own IO section of "infantrymen, communications specialists, intelligence analysts, [PSYOP] specialists, a public affairs specialist, fire support personnel, and civil affairs specialists."[6] Every mission, combat, and noncombat the 3d BCT conducted in Iraq employed information operations.

IO Cells in Bosnia

A lesson JRTC observer-controllers learned from deployed units and units in pre-deployment mission rehearsal exercises can be summed up as follows: "The success or failure of missions executed in Bosnia-Herzegovina . . . in large part falls on the battalion/task force battle staff's ability to conduct an information operations (IO) synchronization meeting."[7] A battalion's planning, coordination, execution, and assessment processes for information operations and influence are tied to its battle rhythm through capable IO cells.

In Bosnia, IO staff sections were formed in units below brigade. The 1st Battalion, 104th Cavalry Regiment (1-104 CAV), created an S7 cell with a staff section headed by the IOCOORD, who coordinated with the S2 and S3. The 1-104 CAV's S7 initially consisted of a field artillery captain, a senior fire support NCO, a public affairs element with a PAO, and a junior NCO.[8] The PAO section separated from the S7 after deploying in theater but continued to support the commander in close coordination with the S7.[9]

Like the subordinate battalions of the IBCT and companies of TF 1-35 AR, TF 1-104 CAV's IO cell relied on fire supporters at the company level to implement IO planning and execute IO tasks. The tempo of peace operations permitted a weekly IOWG at which the S7 coordinated information operations within the squadron. The S7 provided talking points; wrote television and radio scripts for interviews; and integrated them into operations that were sometimes conducted at the squad level. The 1-104 CAV S7 facilitated targeting meetings chaired by the squadron TF commander and attended by troop commanders, the S2, S3, and S5, the PAO, PSYOP team NCO, TF chaplain, and staff judge advocate representatives as required. The S7 was the link between brigade and battalion IO planning, coordination, execution, and assessment, which enabled the IOWGs to support the targeting process as well as the higher level IOWG.

IO Sections in Operation Enduring Freedom

In Afghanistan, the responsibility to plan, coordinate, execute, and assess information operations moved still lower down the organizational chain. Using organic personnel and resources to achieve information superiority in the battlespace and leveraging information operations in support of the commander's desired end state, the combined U.S.-led joint task force began phase IV, follow-through SOSO in December 2003. SOSO mainly employ low-density/high-demand civil affairs and PSYOP assets. With the high demand for these forces to support pending operations in Iraq, maneuver units and battalion-size elements conducted the tasks such units would perform in SOSO and employed information operations.

The 1st Battalion of the 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment and the 2d Battalion of the 8th Marine Regiment decided to employ the 1st IOC(L) S39 concept in Afghanistan.[10] The S39 staff concept provides an IO staff officer at the battalion level with a captain and senior NCO to man the cell. The S39 synchronized nonlethal effects, coordinating them through the S3 or executive officer to the battalion commander for approval. The S39 brought together an IO staff from TF elements to plan, coordinate, execute, and assess information operations executed by the battalion's supporting maneuver companies, engineers, and medical forces. The concept enabled

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Minutes after gunfire interrupted a demonstration in Kirkuk, Iraq, the 173d Airborne Brigade Information Operations Officer is interviewed by local media, 31 December 2003.

an EBO approach focused on the commander's intent by incorporating tracking processes for all operations in the TF area of operations.

Under the S39 concept developed by 1st IOC(L), the S39's duties were to—

- Develop the battalion IO objectives in harmony with the coalition joint task force (CJTF) IO plan.
- Plan tactical deception efforts to enhance force protection and surprise.
- Act as the S3's executive agent to ensure operations security (OPSEC).
- Plan dissemination of PSYOP products and other approved messages to the target audience (for example, village bulletin boards).
- Develop IO-effects assessments from situation reports on target audience perceptions; receptivity to PSYOP and other messages; and interaction between the local populace and friendly forces.
- Lead the battalion IOWG.
- Coordinate with the CJTF IO cell.
- Recommend PSYOP products and submit PSYOP product-development worksheets to the CJTF PSYOP support element.
- Assess the effectiveness of adversary information operations and plan appropriate counteractions.
- Coordinate public affairs and CMO to support IO objectives.
- Employ COMCAM assets and support for battlefield documentation.
- Coordinate humanitarian assistance with CMO units to support influence and IO objectives.
- Coordinate with the battalion medical officer to provide medical assistance and Medical Civic Action Program operations in the battalion AO to support influence and IO objectives.
- Coordinate engineer operations to support military operations and functions and highlight the benefits that accrue to the local populace.
- Provide talking points to TF leaders for face-to-face engagement with local leaders.

Company-Level IO

The way battalion IO sections coordinate with and support brigade IO planning efforts is mirrored at the company level. Fire support personnel fulfill the IO staff role for the company commander. In Operation Joint Guardian, company FSIO sections supported maneuver commanders by performing nonlethal intelligence preparation of the battlespace to focus information-gathering efforts and identify opportunities to apply information operations, either at the company level or for higher headquarters.

Company-level units in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) are integrating information operations into maneuver operations to support battalion or brigade IO objectives. JRTC observer-controllers have found that the company FST can effectively serve as the IO cell. The FSO is the company commander's primary coordinator for IO tasks.[11] One company commander tasked to conduct information operations in OIF identified two major purposes for company-level information operations: "First, you must distribute information to the people. Uninformed citizens in a country we just subjugated in war have the potential to demonstrate and possibly riot. You must inform them of your goals and actions. Second, information operations involve not only passing out information; it requires the collection of information. The development of an informed populace and involvement of community leaders by a commander leads to information about hostile threats and benevolent projects."[12]

- Prepares and disseminates to key personnel the target synchronization matrix and the IO plan, includ-

ing themes and messages, talking points, and measures of effectiveness (MOEs).

- Prepares the company commander for bilateral negotiations and media events.[13]
- Translates IO objectives into tactical tasks at the company level that support company operations.
- Ensures that reporting requirements support higher headquarters IO cell effects-assessment indicators and MOEs.
- Identifies information in patrol and maneuver-unit reporting that supports postexecution effects assessment of IO objectives for higher headquarters.

In OIF, the headquarters service battery (HSB) of the 1st Battalion, 82d Field Artillery, established itself as an IO support cell. Contractors took over many of the HSB's routine tasks (primarily logistics), so the battery commander established a 7-person IO support cell that provided subject matter expertise in the areas of OSINT analysis; unit-level counterintelligence operations; imagery support; and interface and coordination with "Peace 106 FM," a radio station run by Iraqis. The IO support cell also provided subject matter expertise, information, and planning support to fire support personnel in maneuver battalions and companies, pooling resources to leverage when and where they were needed.

The trend for brigades and battalions to plan, coordinate, execute, and assess information operations in combat and in MOOTW will only continue. The Stryker Brigade Combat Team already incorporates a brigade IOCOORD and PSYOP officer in its organizational design and will set the trend for future development of IO cells at brigade and below. As the Army transforms, brigades and battalions will manage information operations all the way down to the company level.

Since Operation Joint Guardian in Kosovo, company and troop units have used FSOs and NCOs to plan, coordinate, execute, and assess IO tasks. In OIF, this trend continues. Companies now appoint IO officers to provide links to battalion and brigade IO sections.

Units in Iraq and Afghanistan are writing the next chapter on the formation of IO cells at brigade and below. They are testing and refining organizational models, TTP, and SOPs that will become the new model. The field artillery branch, which has assumed the lead for integrating information operations at the tactical level, must capture these lessons learned and incorporate them into doctrine, training curriculums, and TTP for field artillery personnel who will serve as FSIOs, S7s, and S39s, and for Career Field 30 field-grade rank IO personnel who will direct their operations. ***MR***

NOTES

1. See CPT Gary J. Schreckengost and CPT Gary A. Smith, "[IO Information operations] IO in SOSO [stability operations and support operations] at the Tactical Level: Converting Brigade IO Objectives into Battalion IO Tasks," *Field Artillery Journal* (July-August 2004): 12. The S39 position mirrors the J39 position of director for information operations found in several of the unified commands and in joint task forces (JTFs). The Army's concept of the G7 would formalize the standing of the IO cell in corps and divisions. The S7 is its subordinate staff reflection at brigade and battalion.
2. LTC Kevin Milton and CW3 John P. Watson, "Tactical Information Operations and Effects Based Operations," briefing, on-line at <http://sill-www.army.mil/USMC/Targeting/Docs/Fort%20Sill>, no longer accessible.
3. The 1st Information Operations Command (Land) (IOC[L]) was formerly known as the Land Information Warfare Activity.
4. MAJ Marc J. Romanych and LTC Kenneth Krumm, "Tactical Information Operations in Kosovo," *Military Review* (September-October 2004): 58.
5. MAJ Cynthia Glenister, "Information Operations in the IBCT," *Military Review* (May-June 2002): 60.
6. SPC Michael Carden, 3d Brigade Combat Team Public Affairs, 82d Airborne Division, "IO," quoting MAJ Steve Sears, on-line at <www.bragg.army.mil/afvc-c/Stories/IO.htm>, accessed 17 March 2005.
7. MAJ Matt Anderson, CPT Joel Hamby, and CPT Frank O'Donnell, "Battalion/Task Force Targeting and the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) in the Information Operations (IO) Environment," on-line at < www.iwar.org.uk/iwar/resources/call/00-4ch1.htm>, accessed 17 March 2005.
8. Schreckengost and Smith, 13.
9. CPT Eric Guenther and Gary Schreckengost, "Converting the IO Concept into Reality," *Armor* (July-August 2003): 18-19.
10. IO planners of the 1st IOC(L) Field Support Division developed a plan to create the S39 to resolve the personnel shortage to conduct IO planning, coordination, and assessment at the battalion level.
11. SPC Robert Gray and CPT Anthony Lugo, U.S. Army Center for Army Lessons Learned Handbook 04-14, *Effects-Based Operations Handbook, Brigade to Company Level* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 2004), 49.
12. CPT Dan Morgan, untitled essay, available on-line at <www.companycommand.com>, accessed 17 March 2005.
13. Gray and Lugo, 50.

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